

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07
INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 USIA-06
OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-05 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 PA-01
PRS-01 IO-13 /121 W
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R 130602Z DEC 77
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7064
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JOHANNESBURG 3287

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, SF
SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICA REPORTS NEW OFFSHORE GAS STRIKE; OIL HOPES UP

REF: (A) JOHANNESBURG 0775, (B) JOHANNESBURG 2278 (DECEMBER
21, 1976

1. ON DECEMBER 12, JOHANNESBURG'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY,
THE CITIZEN, FRONTPAGED AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY MINISTER OF MINES,
S.P. BOTHA, THAT A NEW GAS STRIKE HAD BEEN MADE OFF THE SOUTHERN
COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA "DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS" BY THE SOUTHERN
OIL EXPLORATION CORPORATION'S (SOEKOR) SEDCO K OFFSHORE DRILL
RIG. CLEARLY ADOPTING AN UNDERSTANDABLY CAUTIOUS STANCE, MESSRS.
BOTHA AND DAVID DE VILLIERS, SOEKOR CHAIRMAN, AGREED THAT
"IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THE GAS DISCOVERY INDICATED
THE PRESENCE OF OIL OR WHETHER THE GAS ITSELF WAS OF ANY MEANINGFUL
QUANTITY". THE CITIZEN'S CORRESPONDENT GOES ONE STEP FURTHER,
HOWEVER; SUGGESTING THAT THE COUNTRY'S OIL HOPES HAVE BEEN "RAISED".

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2. COMMENT: AMCIT WILLIAM R. JORDAN, FORMER IMCO
SERVICES SOUTH AFRICA (HALLIBURTON) REP (BEFORE HALLIBURTON'S
PULL-OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA) (REF. A), AND CURRENT TECHNICAL
DIRECTOR OF "DRILCHEM (PTY) LIMITED", INFORMED RRO SWEETWOOD
DEC. 12 THAT THE ABOVE-CITED PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT IS "ESSENTIALLY
CORRECT"; AND ADDED THE FOLLOWING:

3. JORDAN REAFFIRMED THAT HIS COMPANY, "DRILCHEM" (REF.A) CONTINUES TO SUPPLY SOEKOR WITH ITS OIL WELL DRILLING MUD REQUIREMENTS AND IS PROVIDING RELATED ENGINEERING SERVICES AS REQUIRED. ACCORDING TO JORDAN, THE REPORTED STRIKE IS LOCATED 61 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF THE COUNTRY'S SOUTHERN COASTLINE, EQUIDISTANT BETWEEN MOSSEL BAY AND PLETTENBERG BAY (APPROXIMATE COORDINATES: 34 DEGREES 40 MINUTES SOUTH; 22 DEGREES 48 MINUTES EAST). HIGH PRESSURE GAS, "WITH A SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY OF CONDENSATES" (UNMEASURED TO DATE, BUT SCHEDULED FOR TESTING DURING WEEK OF DECEMBER 19) WAS ENCOUNTERED ON NOVEMBER 27 AT A DEPTH OF 2,987 METERS (9,800 FEET). JORDAN NOTED THAT THE FIND WAS UNEXPECTED AT THIS DEPTH AND THAT "A FULL SCALE BLOWOUT WAS AVERTED ONLY THROUGH THE HERCULEAN EFFORTS OF THE EMERGENCY MUD CONTROL TEAM ON BOARD." JORDAN INSPECTED THE DRILL AND BLOWOUT EQUIPMENT SHORTLY AFTER THE DISCOVERY, HIS OBSERVATIONS, THOUGH AS PATENTLY GUARDED AS THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT, NONETHELESS INCLUDE THE VIEW THAT, IN THIS INSTANCE, LIQUID CONDENSATES PRESENT IN THE GAS APPEAR TO BE IMPORTANTLY ABOVE THOSE OF SOEKOR'S INITIAL DISCOVERY WELL REPORTED ONE YEAR AGO (REF.B), AND COMPARABLE TO SUPERIOR OIL'S 1969 DISCOVERY 60 KILOMETERS EAST OF THIS PRESENT SITE. AVAILABLE REPORTS INDICATE THAT SUPERIOR'S DISCOVERY, THOUGH INDICATIVE OF COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES OF OIL, WAS JUDGED BY THE OIL COMPANY TO REPRESENT A MINOR OILFIELD ONLY. THE AREA WAS ABANDONED UNTIL SOEKOR LAUNCHED INTO ITS PRESENT PROGRAM IN THIS GENERAL REGION IN 1976. END COMMENT.

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4. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR PROGRESS AND REPORT DEVELOPMENTS.

JOHNSON

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